

THE ASYLUM

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1. 1799 US Dime, Liberty's head, facing left, with stars. Rev. Eagle with shield, facing right.

2. 1799 US Dime, Liberty's head, facing left, with stars. Rev. Eagle with shield, facing right.



3. 1799 US Dime, Liberty's head, facing left, with stars. Rev. Eagle with shield, facing right.

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5. 1799 US Dime, Liberty's head, facing left, with stars. Rev. Eagle with shield, facing right.

6. 1799 US Dime, Liberty's head, facing left, with stars. Rev. Eagle with shield, facing right.



7. 1799 US Dime, Liberty's head, facing left, with stars. Rev. Eagle with shield, facing right.

8. 1799 US Dime, Liberty's head, facing left, with stars. Rev. Eagle with shield, facing right.

9. 1799 US Dime, Liberty's head, facing left, with stars. Rev. Eagle with shield, facing right.



“Twenty-two acknowledged concubines and a library of 62,000 volumes attested to the variety of his [Emperor Gordianus] inclinations; and from the products which he left behind him, it appears that the former as well as the latter were designed for use rather than ostentation.”

EDWARD GIBBON
1737-1794

The Asylum

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Front Cover: A page from Edgar H. Adams, *Varieties of Early US Gold: Quarter Eagles 1796-1834/Half Eagles 1795-1834/Eagles 1795-1804/Supplement of Private Gold Coinage of California*. This page is from an unpublished manuscript written by Adams that was part of the John J. Ford Jr. library which was sold at auction by George Frederick Kolbe, 1 June 2004, lot 122. Photo courtesy George Frederick Kolbe.

John J. Ford: An Assessment

by Joel J. Orosz

John J. Ford. Whisper the name at a large numismatic gathering, and watch the fur fly. To his large group of admirers, Ford was the modern numismatic market's creation myth made flesh: the man who literally invented serious, fact-based cataloguing. To his smaller, but highly vocal group of detractors, Ford was not far shy of Beelzebub himself, an ethically challenged man. It will fall to historians of the future — who will have a perspective that comes only with distance — to properly assess the man and his legacy. But this backslid historian, with none of the requisite distance (for John J. Ford was always kind and helpful to me), will do his best to look at both sides of the man, and come up with a sort of "first draft" of a balanced assessment.

Any such balanced look needs to put the man into the context of his times. Ford was a member of what Tom Brokaw has called the "Greatest Generation" of Americans. Certainly that title was apt for the numismatists of the generation born after 1900 and before 1940. The roll call is remarkable; besides Ford, this was the generation that gave us Eric P. Newman, Kenneth Bressett, Walter Breen, Don Taxay, George Fuld, and Q. David Bowers, among others. Collectively, they transformed a hobby from hucksterism to historicism. All one need to do is to compare Ford's section of the 1952 ANA sale with B. Max Mehl's catalogues of the late 1940s to understand just how profound this transformation truly was, akin to leaving a circus sideshow to entering a postgraduate seminar room.

Ford did not publish nearly as much as the stellar roster of numismatists noted above, but he was the first dealer to widely disseminate their scholarship through his cataloguing. This brought the hard facts of the new learning directly to the collectors who previously had subsisted on a diet of soft soap and tall tales. Ford provided the proverbial rising tide that lifted all of the boats.

He did not stop there — John J. Ford was one of the first to openly promote a segment of the hobby that had all but withered away during the first half of the 20th century: numismatic literature. In an era when coin dealers routinely discarded the libraries of collectors after buying their coin collections, Ford championed the merits of the printed word, particularly the classic output of the Brothers Chapman. He used his bully pulpit as a coin dealer to bring the numismatic literature hobby back from the nether regions, and it was only appropriate that he was the first person to address a meeting of the Numismatic Bibliomania Society. No appreciation of the man in this light would be complete, of course, without mention of the fact that he owned the world's first (and, thankfully, last) slabbed numismatic auction catalogue (a spoof concocted by B.U.G.S., the Bibliographic Universal Grading Service, a.k.a Stack's).

If his merits loomed large, however, his faults also were sometimes front and center. He was the embodiment of the things that many Americans find distasteful about New Yorkers: the swagger, the casual abrasiveness, the in-your-face “fugedabotit” of the Gothamite. He rarely suffered a fool gladly, and his withering scorn for those too lazy to do their homework was freely dispensed. Although he could be generous with information (as he often was to the author of this piece), he could also willfully withhold assistance. Most distressing of all, his superb collection of coins, medals and paper money could only have been assembled in direct competition with the wants of his own customers.

Revere him or revile him, there is no denying his enormous impact upon US numismatics. Ford set a standard of American cataloguing that has been often emulated but infrequently equaled. Q. David Bowers once remarked that his “desert island reading” would be a complete set of Ford-produced New Netherlands catalogues, and he is the first to admit that his own stellar cataloguing career owes a large debt to Ford’s example. Numismatic bibliophiles, too, can hardly overestimate the extent to which Ford’s intervention and example revived their dormant hobby. This was not just in terms of promotion, but also in literally saving thousands of books, catalogues and journals from the pulp mill. Detractors might argue that scholarly cataloguing and literature collecting would have happened anyway, even if John Ford had never darkened the door of a coin shop. Perhaps — but surely these revolutions would never have happened so quickly, or so thoroughly, without Ford’s catalytic energy and example.

So how to bring balance to an assessment of such a complex figure? Surely John J. Ford was not the faultless paragon that some would have you believe, nor did he possess hooves, horns and a pointy tail, as others would insist. Horatio Alger, were he the author of this piece, would say that John J. Ford was the beau ideal of the self-made man; Mark Twain, were he the author, would have noted that this relieved the Almighty of a heavy responsibility. Ford brooked no nonsense, took no prisoners, and shook more than one complacent soul out his lethargy. While it is true that he broke a few eggs, it is also true that he made some spectacular omelets.

My own view is that his superb accomplishments will be remembered and celebrated long after his personal quirks are forgotten. John J. Ford indeed earned his place as one of the brightest lights of the Greatest Generation of U.S. numismatists. Perhaps a better metaphor would be that of a beacon, one that shone too intensely for some, but which illuminated the way for many others. I think John would have liked this metaphor, and would have impishly added that he was the “complete package,” for he also came with a built-in foghorn. Farewell, John; your light will endure after the blare from your horn has faded away.

A Posthumous Interview with John J. Ford

by Pete Smith

I first heard John Ford talk on August 18, 1980, at the ANA Convention in Cincinnati.¹ About 100 bibliophiles attended the meeting. I recall Harry Bass standing near the back of the room and heckling the speaker. The friendship was obvious between the owners of two great numismatic libraries.

An interview by Maurice Rosen was published in the *Rosen Numismatic Advisory* and reprinted in the *Coin World* issue of June 19, 1985. This focused on grading and investment topics. Ford was interviewed again by Mark van Winkle in 1990 for a two-part article in *Legacy*, published by Heritage Rare Coin Galleries. (Excerpts below reprinted with permission.)

I interviewed Ford on August 15, 1991, for his listing in *American Numismatic Biographies*. He was an amusing storyteller but it was difficult to distill usable facts from his colorful stories.

Ford was a recurring speaker at the Numismatic Theater during the ANA conventions. I recall hearing his talk in Denver in 1996 and a couple of other conventions. His August 16, 1996, talk was titled "Ignorance and Numismatics."

I imagine one last interview with Ford for *The Asylum* based on previously published interviews, my earlier interview and my recollections of his talks for the ANA. The answers are his words although the order of questions is fictitious.

Smith: *How did your interests expand from collecting coins to collecting numismatic literature?*

Ford(1): Clarence Edgar was a bank teller in my home town of Rockville Centre, New York. When I was eleven years old I became interested in coins. I would borrow a dollar from my father and I'd get a couple of rolls of Lincoln cents, take them home and look for SYDBs, 14Ds and so forth. I'd go through them in half an hour and be back for more. Either because he felt sorry for me or to get rid of me, Clarence Edgar gave me my first legitimate rare coin, an 1846 silver dollar. Clarence subsequently got me into coin dealing on the

¹The quotes from Ford are taken from the following sources:

- (1) [J.J. Ford], "Bibliomania Meeting at Cincinnati ANA," *The Asylum* 1 (1980-1), pp. 17-24.
- (2) J.J. Ford, "Conclusion of Talk by 'Leather Freak' John J. Ford at 1980 ANA Bibliomania Meeting," *The Asylum* 1 (1980-1), pp. 49-56.
- (3) M. van Winkle, "An Interview with John J. Ford Jr., Part 1," *Legacy* 3/1 (1990), pp. 16-19, 42-45, 55-58.
- (4) M. van Winkle, "An Interview with John J. Ford Jr., Part 2," *Legacy* 3/2 (1990), pp. 20-23, 48-58.

side, and we became very good friends. After World War II, he became a specialist in selling numismatic books, as did my late friend Aaron Feldman. Clarence Edgar died in 1958, and of course, Aaron Feldman died in 1976. Feldman is the fellow who popularized the saying, "Buy the book before the coin."

Smith: *What is the first book you recall buying?*

Ford(1): One of the first numismatic books I ever obtained [was] a copy of Gilbert's work on half cents. In October of 1941, I visited Thomas Elder in Pleasantville, New York. At that time Elder must have been in his late sixties. Homer K. Downing and I heard about the legendary Tom Elder, and we went up to see him together. Though he was semi-retired, he still ran ads in Hobbies Magazine. We went up to find out if he had any coins left.

Elder, who originally published the Gilbert half cent book in 1916, still had a quantity of unbound copies available. He asked us, "Would you like one of these at three dollars?" meaning the unbound text and the set of eight photographic plates. We both gave him the three dollars and we each got a set. I went to a book-binder in the Bronx names Levine, who was frequented by Homer Downing and the American Numismatic Society. I think he charged me another three dollars to bind the book. To give you an idea of what kind of amateur I was, I had the title of the book put on the front cover: United States Half Cents / E. Gilbert, and underneath, 1916. Then at the bottom of the cover, I put "John J. Ford, 1941," which is the way a real seventeen-year-old would do it.

If I was going to see Tom Elder today, I would certainly handle the situation differently. The first thing I would do after finding out that he wanted three dollars for one copy, would be to ask him what he wanted for the whole pile. The second thing I would do would be to get him to autograph as many copies as I could. Then, instead of having the book bound in plain library buckram with my name on the cover, I would have them nicely bound with the title and author stamped on the spine. Obviously, having the name stamped on the front cover instead of the spine is not very practical if you're looking for a book on the shelf.

Smith: *Do most dealers share your love for literature?*

Ford(1): I was under the impression that most of the current breed couldn't read! No, I take that back. It's a dirty crack. They can read. They can read the Grey Sheet, and they can find the pages in the Guide Book, but beyond that their libraries are limited. I asked some of them the reasons for that, and the usual reply was, "I don't have time." They want something with pictures, and underneath the pictures they want prices. Preferably, you put out new editions very quickly with new prices, but anything that involves more than a sentence or two befuddles them because it becomes boring. I'm not

being sarcastic. No, I am being sarcastic! In fact, I'm being nasty! I think many of the coin dealers would be a lot better off if they read something. I'm serious.

Smith: *What do you think about the paper used in modern books?*

Ford(2): What really bothers me ... now is the poor quality of paper used to print most of the books today. According to authorities in the Library of Congress, there is a self-destruct fabric built into the paper that's being used today. Going to extremes, we have the world coin and paper money catalogues published by Krause, which are printed on pulp. Well, they have to come out with a new edition every year because after two or three years the paper will start to go. Because of the cost today of composition, printing, labor, binding and everything else, including our economic situation, there is a tendency toward using cheap paper. The idea is to sell a lot of books to a lot of people, without giving a damn whether they will last.

I have a close relationship with the Barrow shop which specializes in the treatment and preservation of paper. They have worked, for example, on the United States Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. It might interest you to know that in 1940, some nitwit working for the United States Government, where a lot of nitwits end up, "repaired" the Constitution of the United States with Scotch tape! The glue used in the original Scotch tape breaks down chemically and the oil leaches into the paper. The tape itself can be removed by using acetone or toluene but the stain is extremely difficult to remove. The Barrow people have discovered a way to do it but it is extremely dangerous. The chemicals used have to be heated to a certain temperature. If they are overheated by a few degrees, the chemicals reach a flash point, and a few degrees above that and boom! The windows go out. Maybe you go out.

Smith: *Would you like to say something about bindings?*

Ford(2): I wanted to say something about bindings. There is an outfit in New York called Talas Library Service. Talas sells you anything that you could possibly need for the preservation and repair of a book. One of the greatest discoveries that I ever made was Talas. Through self-examination and talking with the people at Talas, I found ways to preserve and protect my leather bindings that were cracking or peeling. I originally started with Lexol, which both deacidifies the leather and puts neatsfoot oil and lanolin back into it. Then, I became more advanced. I bought the potassium lactate solution from Talas, and separately deacidified the leather, and then I put the oils back into it. Soon I started buying ordinary oil pigment from art shops, and mixed it with linseed oil. I've got to the point now, that if you gave me a crummy leather binding, I can restore it to the degree that it looks brand new. Talas also sells methyl acetate,

which is the finest glue for repairing paper. I use it for repairing banknotes too. It's fantastic. Then, they sell tissue for repairing torn pages in numerous different textures, colors, and shades. I've repaired pages in books, and I can't even locate the tear. A lot of my information came from Barlow, who also repairs books and documents. It's not called repair. It's called restoration. If it doesn't look like it's been repaired, it's been restored. If it looks like it's been repaired, it's been repaired. This is something that you do as a labor of love. Bookbinders do a so-so job, because they're strictly commercial. You can't pay a guy enough for the time and effort I spend on restoring a book.

Smith: *How much did Walter Breen contribute to your catalogues?*

Ford(3): The majority of coins in any consignment didn't need much research, but anything that did would go into a Number 10 envelope and be given to Walter Breen. Walter's job was to put on that envelope, in no particular order, everything he either knew or could find out about the coin. This might necessitate, in some instances, Walter's going to the American Numismatic Society because the New Netherlands Coin Company library was not that elaborate. Often Walter would spend a whole day on one coin. I would take all the material that was in Number 10 envelopes and use Walter's data, if I believed it or trusted it or liked it and thought it wasn't superfluous, plus what I could dig up in my own library. This way we came out with some pretty good stuff.

Depending on the coin, in some cases, 80 percent of the technical information that our catalogues became known for came from Walter — and in other cases none of it, depending on the series or the coin.

Smith: *What did you learn from Wayte Raymond?*

Ford(1): I went out to Montauk to visit with Wayte Raymond. During one of our earlier conversations, I asked him what was the secret of the coin business. I said, "Do you have to have a lot of money? Do you have to have a big stock of coins? Do you have to have real good customers? What's the secret?"

Wayte Raymond replied, "John, it's very simple: You just have to know more than the man you're doing business with."

Smith: *And from Abe Kosoff?*

Ford(4): Abe Kosoff didn't know as much about coins as he knew about people. He was probably the most astute handler of people I ever met. He was charming, charismatic, and, as one individual referred to him, "the smoothest guy I ever met." I once said to him, "You should know more about coins and less about people," and he gave me a piece of advice I never forgot. He said, "Remember, it is the people who own the coins."

Smith: *Tell the Milky Way story one more time for readers of The Asylum.*

Ford(3): F.C.C. Boyd owned two Brasher Doubloons, and he gave one of them to Yale University. The other one he decided to sell. This was in the fall of 1956. So I made a deal with Mrs. Norweb: she wanted to buy a Brasher Doubloon.

We had already gotten the Brand Brasher Doubloon, the Ten Eyck specimen. We had negotiated that piece for \$12,000 from Horace Louis Philip Brand, who, when I sent him the money, told me his price was really \$13,000. So I sent the coin back with a rather vociferous letter telling him that he was a creep because he jacked up the price right in the middle of the deal. Meanwhile, Mrs. Norweb wanted to pay \$14,500 for a Brasher Doubloon. So I told Boyd that I'd give him \$12,000 for his, and he said okay.

This was the piece that was supposedly dug up in a sewer in Philadelphia in 1899 by workmen. Mrs. Norweb asked all kinds of questions about everything. I mean she had to know about all known specimens, where they were, who located them, how high is up, and everything else.

I told Walter Breen, "Tomorrow morning I'm driving down to Ringoes, New Jersey, to pick up the Brasher Doubloon, and Mrs. Norweb is coming at 4 o'clock. I want you to come in early tomorrow, like 9:30, and I want you to write a synopsis, a briefing paper, on everything there is to know about Brasher Doubloons, how many specimens are known, where they are, who owns them, what they paid for them.

Walter had this insatiable desire for Milky Way and Mars bars. I had to buy three boxes at a time, and I'd just leave them in Walter's office. He'd eat one whenever he felt like it. I'm driving down to Ringoes to pick up the Brasher Doubloon, while Walter is doing his research, sitting in the back room with the classical music eating Milky Ways. I walked in about twenty after three, huffing and puffing because Ringoes was about 70 miles away. It was a cold February day in 1957, and I'm supposed to meet my wife and some friends at 6 o'clock to see a movie, *Around the World in 80 Days*.

This was my big day. The first coin I ever sold for more than 5,000 bucks. You don't realize how much money 12 grand was in 1957. You could buy six Ford convertibles for that kind of money.

My office had a beautiful desk and a big chair behind the desk and a big chair for the customer in front and a leather chair over in the corner. Walter sat in the chair, the leather chair facing me, and he discussed his briefing paper on the Brasher Doubloon. He said, "There's the so-and-so specimen. There's the Mint specimen. There's the Stickney specimen. There's this and that." Well, I'm familiar with all of this, but he's getting me real hot. We discuss them, and all of a sudden I hear the buzzer. It's Mrs. Norweb. And I say,



John J. Ford holds forth on numismatic subjects.
Photo courtesy Stacks

"Walter, get the hell out of here." Walter is wearing a toga and sandals and looks like he needs a bath. So I get him the hell out of there, and I hear Charles Wormser open the door.

"Hellooo, Mrs. Norweb.: And she said, "Hellooo, Charles," and all this crap. And he kissed her hand. He was the greeter, you see, and he brought her in. Mrs. Norweb was about 5'5" and somewhat rotund. She had on this mink coat that, as she walked, you could just hear the dollar signs. I mean, this was a mink coat that shone. It was gorgeous, probably cost as much as the Brasher Doubloon. She came in with the mink coat and sat down in the chair facing me and said, "Hellooo, John."

I said, "Hellooo, Mrs. Norweb." We went through all this garbage, and she said, "And what do we have today?" She knew damn well what we had. You know, this was all set up. It was just like a Gorbachev-Bush meeting, prearranged.

So she said, "Tell me about this coin." So for half an hour, I tell her all about the Brasher Doubloon, how many specimens are known, where they are. And she said, "John, your knowledge is so remarkable."

She doesn't know I've just been briefed by the Great Breen, who fed me all this stuff, most of which I'm familiar with, but when you discuss it with somebody and you're red hot, it comes pouring out and you really sound like you know what you're talking about. She says, "Do you have the coin?" And I take the coin out of my vest pocket and hand it to her. She looks at it and says, "This is quite satisfactory," and she drops it in her purse, and we just made \$2,500 bucks. So she gets up and she wishes me a good day and she starts to waddle out. And in the middle of her rear end is a Milky Way crushed into this \$12,000 mink coat. I mean crushed. She had been sitting on the thing for almost an hour, and with the heat of her body, the thing was diffused in the fur. She walked out past Wormser's desk, and he ran in front of her and opened the door and took her out to the elevator.

And when he came walking back in, he said, "Holy Jesus, what was that?" It actually looked like she had an accident of some kind. You know, a Milky Way has got nougat and chocolate and I don't know what the hell else it's got in it, but there were all different colors. The thing was huge. So we went down the elevator and we never heard another word about it. I never knew; did she ever figure out she got it in our office or did she think she got it in a taxi. It probably ruined the coat. It baked in. And of course, the chair; it was smeared all over the seat. I spent the next day cleaning it off the seat with linseed oil and a putty knife. It was a mess.

Smith: Another of my favorite stories is about John Murrell.

Ford(4): We had a collector client by the name of John H. Murrell, who was a very wealthy guy, chairman of the board of

DeGolyer-McNaughton, then the largest oil exploration firm in the world. He became our customer in 1959 through John Rowe. In the Boyd estate I found a group of Mexican gold ingots. These are the ones that T.V. Buttrey, Eric Newman's friend, claims are false, but he's full of beans.² They were from a Spanish wreck in the middle of the 18th century, and Murrell expressed an interest in them. In fact, he wanted all this treasure together with a number of US gold coins. Mrs. Boyd wanted to sell the ingots, and Rowe set the deal up. He got Murrell to come to the 1959 Central States Convention. The show was in Kansas City: I think the name of the hotel was the Muelbach. It was there that Harry Truman used to hang out. The Suite on the top floor was called the Presidential Suite.

The PNG meeting broke up about 10:30, and Rowe came to the door and said, "Big M is ready to see you." So I got my briefcase with all the goodies in it and we went up. When we got off the elevator on the top floor there was a long corridor. No rooms, but at the end there was a big double door, and it said: Presidential Suite. We went up to the doors and knocked, and Murrell answered.

Murrell was about 55, rather short, stocky. He was wearing zebra-striped pajamas, craziest things you ever saw, and he smelled like a perfume factory. He had this suite with something like four bedrooms, two kitchens, three living rooms; it was huge. It took up the whole floor of the hotel. We came in and started talking, and he asked, "Are you boys hungry?" So he picked up the phone and ordered. He always liked to order for you. So he ordered all this junk, and we sat around eating until one or two in the morning — steaks, vegetables, strawberries, ice cream, coffee, whatever he ordered. It took about four guys to bring it all into the biggest living room. So we got through eating, and then he wanted to see the coins and ingots.

There was this long coffee table in front of the couch, and I laid out all these gold coins, bars, ingots, and other stuff. Meanwhile M has a bottle of bourbon and has found a water glass in the bathroom and he's pouring the bourbon into it. It's now about 3 o'clock in the morning, and he's getting a little woozy. I wasn't getting woozy. I was 34 years old and Rowe was 22. All we could see were dollar signs floating in the air. So he said, "I think this is pretty good, John. I'll take it."

Now, the price was around \$64,000 to \$67,000, and he's going to take it. It was the biggest deal I ever had. It was better than the

² For more recent discussions on this controversy see: T.V. Buttrey, "False Western American Gold Bars," *American Journal of Numismatics*² (1997), pp. 89-112; J.J. Orosz, "Ad Hominem Ad Nauseam: The 'Great Debate' between Michael Hodder and Theodore Buttrey," *The Asylum* 17/3 (1999), pp. 23-29; M. Hodder, "Western American Gold and Unparted Bars: A Review of the Evidence," *American Journal of Numismatics*² 11 (1999), pp. 85-149; and Adams p. 120 herein.

Brasher Doubloon deal by far. So then he said, "John" — this is John Rowe — "Go into the other bedroom there and get my checkbook out of my suit."

Well, he must have been drunk when he came in because the pants were on the floor, the jacket was on the bed, the socks were on the ceiling. The whole place was a disaster. But all his other clothes were very neat in the closet. I don't know how that happened. So Rowe was in there going through everything looking for the checkbook. Rowe came back and said, "There is no checkbook."

So I said, "M, there's no checkbook."

"Look in the drawers, look anyplace," he said, as he poured another shot of bourbon. So Rowe ran around looking.

"I can't find the checkbook," he said.

I said, "Rowe, this is important. go down to the desk and ask the guy behind it in the lobby for a blank check."

M said, "Good idea, good idea." So Rowe ran down. He was gone about 15, 20 minutes. Meanwhile, I'm trying to move the bourbon away from M and give him coffee, trying to keep him awake.

Rowe came back and said, "The guy doesn't have a blank check."

I said, "You must be kidding." It's now about a quarter to four, and Murrell is slowly falling asleep. So I said to Rowe, "Go through every drawer in here and get me a Western Union blank. We'll make a check on the back of a Western Union blank."

You know that damn Presidential Suite didn't have one pad of Western Union blanks, not one. So then I said, "This is a hotel. All hotels have Gideon Bibles. Get me a Gideon Bible and we'll rip out the page in the front and we'll use that." Did you know Gideon Bibles have no blank pages in the front? They start right out with the first chapter of Genesis, and there are no end papers. So what are we going to write on? We couldn't write on top of printing. So now we're really desperate. Meanwhile, M's eyeballs are coming down; his head is dropping to his chest.

I said to Rowe, "Get me some paper; I don't care what kind of paper." So Rowe ran in the bathroom and tore off two or three sheets of toilet paper. I don't know how I did it, but I sat there with a fountain pen, and I use the edge of the Gideon Bible to draw a check. I printed the whole damn check out, 67 thousand dollars (or whatever), and M signed it. He then fell over on the couch sound asleep. So we straightened him out, put a pillow underneath his head, and went downstairs.

It was then 5 o'clock in the morning, and we were both hungry and tired. So we ate breakfast. We were the first customers in the coffee shop, naturally, and we had a terrific breakfast. So we fooled around until the bourse opened at 8:30 or 9:00. I walked into the bourse and I was tired. In fact, I was shot. I walked over to where my partner, Charles Wormser, was setting up.

He said, "Did you sell the stuff? Did you sell the stuff?"

I said, "Do you want the good news or the bad news?"

And he said, "Well, what's the good news."

I said, "I sold the stuff."

He said, "That's great. What's the bad news?"

I said, "I'll show you." And I reached into my watch pocket and pulled out the toilet paper. It was folded down to about one inch square; I opened it up and showed him this thing with 88 folds in it., and he asked, "What's that?"

I said, "That's how I got paid."

And he said, "Are you crazy? What are we going to do with this?"

I said, "Well, it's better than nothing."

Wormser was all upset. So when we got back in the office on Monday morning he called the bank in Dallas and said, "I want to speak to the cashier. I have a check here."

The guy said, "Yes?"

Wormser said, "It's a rather peculiar check. It's not a regular check. It's on a funny kind of paper."

The guy said, "Yes, How much is the check for?"

[Wormser] said, "67 thousand dollars."

The cashier asked, "Well what do you want to know? Who signed the check?"

Wormser said, "John H. Murrell."

The man in the bank replied, "It can be on anything, a concrete block. We'll take care of it."

Next we got a phone call from Murrell, and he asked, "You got my check?"

"Yes," I said.

"Don't send it to the bank."

"Why?" I asked.

"I'm sending Frankie up."

I said, "Who's Frankie?"

Click, he hangs up.

So two or three days later I'm sitting in the office having my morning coffee and cigar, looking at the mail, and some bum walks in. I mean a bum. This guy is short and has on scroungy, ratty clothes, looked like he needed a bath. He was carrying a big paper bag. The receptionist goes out, and the guy says, "I want to see Mr. Ford."

The girl asked, "May I ask your name?"

He said, "I want to see Mr. Ford."

She said, "What is the nature of your business?"

"I want to see Mr. Ford."

Wormser is downstairs having coffee or something. So I have to walk out. I was always worried about these kind of deals. So I put my .38 on and closed the door behind me, which means now I'm locked out there with this creep.

The guy asked, "Are you Mr. Ford?"

"Yes."

"I'm Frankie. You got something for me. I got something for you."

So I said, "What am I supposed to have for you?"

"Mr. Murrell's check."

So I had to go back and get the check. You know what was in that paper bag? \$50 bills, the whole paper bag. Murrell was into horses and Frankie took care of all his bets at the track. So, naturally there was a lot of cash involved. Frankie was a trainer or a stable man or something, but he looked like he was born at the race track.

Smith: *Tell me about Paul Franklin.*

Ford(4): I first met Paul Franklin, when he was a collector and vest pocket dealer, in 1950 at the Brooklyn Coin Club. In 1952 I purchased the famous — or infamous — 1860 Parsons & Co. \$20 monetary ingot from him. After authentication it was sold to Don Keefer of Chicago, and after Keefer died in 1954 it went into the Lilly collection via Stack's.

Our success with this ingot suggested to me that we should ask Franklin to locate more ingots. We did so, giving him a bonus for digging up the Parsons piece. Franklin, from his service in World War II, knew a fellow who was (in 1952) in charge of the linemen for Southwestern Bell. These fellows worked in all the small towns in New Mexico, Arizona and Nevada. This guy set up a network where they would seek out coins or ingots in jewelry shops, pawn shops, banks and assay offices. When they located something, the information was routed to me, and if the piece looked promising, Paul (who then lived on Long Island) would fly out and purchase it. New Netherlands Coin Co. supplied the capital and the expertise, and was responsible for marketing whatever was located.

By the mid '50's we had circulars printed, illustrating pioneer gold coins and assay ingots. These were widely distributed. In 1956 and 1957 I spent weeks visiting Western ghost towns. Once this project got started, it lasted twelve to fifteen years, or until fewer and fewer ingots were found. I obtained the last gold assay ingot from Paul Franklin in 1981. He is still around; he has been an antique gun dealer, based in Phoenix, since the 1960's and makes all of the gun shows. Over the years he located some really fabulous material, some of which is in the Lilly Collection (Smithsonian). Some items ended up in the Norweb and Clifford Collections. I still own some interesting pieces Franklin unearthed.

Smith: *What can you say about the US Assay Office gold pieces?*

Ford (4): In 1956-57 Paul Franklin stumbled into a spectacular find of 1953 United States Assay Office gold coins, alloy essays, lead trials, proofing pieces and ingots. Practically everything was new and

unpublished. There was even a rusted steel die. It all started when, on one of his trips west, Franklin found a bank employee in Arizona who had an Assay Office twenty. He bought it for a hundred bucks, which was then well below wholesale (EF-AU coins then brought \$600-\$750). Every time Franklin visited the bank, the teller would have two or three additional pieces. The coins were prooflike, well handled, 1853 USAOG, "900 Fine" double eagles. Some of them were a lot better than others, and the price rose to \$150-\$200 for the nicer ones.

Late in the summer of 1957, Paul Franklin came back to New York with a \$50 round of the US Assay Office dated 1853. It was prooflike — a real weird-looking thing with a heavily reeded edge. The coin came from the same source and Franklin wanted to know what we would pay for it. After Walter Breen (who was working for New Netherlands at the time) and I decided that it was for real, we gave Franklin \$3,000. A couple of weeks later it was sold to Morton Stack for the Lilly Collection. So I said to Franklin, "Wherever this stuff is coming from, let's try to get it all."

It came from a young man who worked behind a window at a bank in Arizona. He was getting the coins from the bank president or vice president, who had been a teller there in 1934, when the stuff was turned in as gold bullion. This guy had apparently kept much of what was turned in twenty-three years earlier, and was now schlepping it out to the young teller, who was his nephew or something. Franklin eventually got from the senior bank officer to an old man, then in his eighties, who lived in Ajo, Arizona, who had the bulk of the hoard. The elderly gentleman did not want his relatives to know what he had or what he contemplated selling. Paul managed to buy for us most of the material during the late winter of 1958.

Among other things there were seven, perfect proof 1853 USAOG, "900 Fine" twenties. Each of these was wrapped in a yellowing linen handkerchief that had the exact weight (in grains, troy) and the exact fineness written on it. We got the coins, but the old man insisted on keeping the handkerchiefs. I purchased two of these essays (which they turned out to be) personally and still have them. We recorded the weights, but did not, at that time, have composition analysis made.

One of the "perfect proof" pieces that we sold went through the hands of several dealers, ending up with Thomas Ryan of Chicago. Ryan sold the piece to Paul Garland, a collector-dealer from Tennessee. Four or five years later some "know-nothing" told Garland that the coin was not a real proof. Eventually someone else told him that it could not be genuine. This got back to me, and I offered to refund what we had sold the piece for to the original purchaser. All the other dealers (mainly PNG members) save one likewise offered to give up their profits and refund money down the

line. The one guy screwed things up, forcing Garland to go berserk. He wrote articles, angry letters to the media and the trade, even to congressmen. Paul Garland was convinced that he had been sold a bad coin ... that he had been taken advantage of. The whole deal ended up in a PNG arbitration: Garland versus Ryan. This was in 1966.

Smith: *Please explain your differences with Eric Newman.*

Ford(4): Those who questioned the authenticity of the Garland USAOG proof, four or five individuals who called themselves a "Study group," not being sure of their technical expertise, enlisted the help of Eric P. Newman. For them Newman happened to be a fortuitous choice, as he erroneously thought that I had double-crossed him on a paper money deal. He was motivated to kick a little butt ... mine.

Over a period of many months the St. Louis genius supposedly studied the Garland and related coins. At the initial PNG. arbitration meeting, held at the ANA Convention in Chicago, Eric Newman presented a twenty or so page indictment of Garland's piece, Paul Franklin, and myself. He alleged that the coins were false (modern counterfeits struck from cast dies), that Franklin was a forger, and that I had been duped.

As the defender of the Garland USAOG proof, I was given a year to prepare a reply to Newman's claims. As the "Expert Witness on behalf of Thomas Ryan Sustaining Genuineness" (my legal title in the arbitration), I prepared a 113-page opinion and analysis that was accompanied by about 100 exhibits. the title of my report was The Franklin Hoard of United States Assay Office of Gold Coins — An Answer to Eric P. Newman. It was a difficult paper to prepare and write, as it is always far more difficult to prove an item authentic than to cry "false." Although the subject was quite complicated, it really wasn't hard to demolish Newman's case. His arguments were really a "smoke and mirrors" job, something written for a technically unsophisticated audience.

My report and the exhibits were delivered to a second PNG arbitration meeting that was held at the 1967 ANA Convention in Miami. Although Franklin and I were present in Chicago to hear Newman's accusations, he found it prudent not to show up and hear my refutation. He had probably heard that I was to be accompanied to Florida by a high-powered, crusty New York trial attorney.

Early in 1968, at the Southern California show, the PNG arbitration panel met and declared that the Paul Garland coin was not a proof. They said nothing either way concerning its authenticity. The USAOG twenty went back to Ryan. I bought it from him in 1971 and sold it to Stack's.

A Bibliography of the Published Works of John J. Ford Jr.

by E. Tomlinson Fort

The following is a bibliography of the known published works of John Ford.¹ Some of the listing is derived from the one published by Stack's in the first catalogue of his collection (14 October 2003, p. 12). However, several corrections, updates and additions have been made. As the reader can see, most of Ford's writings were brief in nature and the bulk of the material dates before the mid-1960s. Ford's chief influence was as a coin dealer and collector as well as a promoter of numismatic literature rather than as a writer.

"The 1861 Paquet Double Eagles," with M. Hodder, and P. S. Rubin, in *The American Numismatic Association Centennial Anthology*, ed. C.W.A. Carlson and M.J. Hodder (Wolfesboro, 1991), pp. 99-126.

"Authentication of Colonial Coins. The Clinton Cent," with Richard D. Kenney, *Coin Collectors Journal*² 17 (1950), pp. 85-94; reprinted in *Stack's Auction* 11 May 2004, John J. Ford collection, part II, pp. 216-219.

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"Charles M. Wormser," *Rare Coin Review* no. 79 (Summer, 1990), pp. 13-15; reprinted in *The Numismatists Weekend Companion*, ed. Q.D. Bowers (Wolfesboro, 1992), pp. 171-177.

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"Counterfeits of US and Other Coins Reported," [with D. Taxay] *The Numismatist* 74 (1964), pp. 21-25, 165-168; 307-312; 441-446.

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The Franklin Hoard of United States Assay Office of Gold Bars. An Answer to Eric P. Newman (n.p. [probably New York], 1967). An

¹The author wishes to thank Wayne Homren, Pete Smith, David Fanning and Don Carlucci for their aid in putting this list together.

extremely rare work prepared for the Professional Numismatist Guild that consists of 113 typed pages, with 27 exhibits (copies of letters and reports). Only a few copies produced. Also titled *Opinion, analysis and exhibits of John J. Ford, Jr. Expert Witness on behalf of Thomas Ryan Sustaining Genuineness*, see below p. 119.

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New Netherlands Coin Company, *Auction Catalogues 1951-1977*. Ford was one of many contributors to these catalogues. Sadly, it is presently impossible to tell which descriptions are his and which are those of other employees of the company.

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"North Carolina Brass," *Colonial Newsletter* 15 (1975), pp. 534-535.

"Nova Constellatio Pattern 'Five' Appears," *Colonial Newsletter* 19 (1980), p. 703.

Numisma. Ford served as the editor of the New Netherlands Coin Company house periodical from its inception in 1954 until it ceased publication in 1960. A limited edition bound set, some issues reprinted, was published: J.J. Ford (ed.), *Numisma 1954-1960* (Wenham, 1996).

"Numismatica Americana: The Bushnell Sale," *Coin Collectors Journal*² 18, pp. 35-41; reprinted in *Rare Coin Review* no. 31 (1978), pp. 43-45; *The Numismatists Fireside Companion*, ed. Q.D. Bowers (Wolfeboro, 1988), pp. 35-43; *Stack's Auction* 12 October 2004, John J. Ford Jr. collection, part V, pp. 4-8.

"Numismatica Americana: The Confederate Cent," *Coin Collectors Journal*² 18/2 (1951), pp. 9-14; reprinted in *Stack's Auction*, 14 October 2003, John J. Ford collection, part I, pp. 217-219; and *Stack's Auction*, 26 May 2005, John J. Ford collection, part X, pp. 209-212

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- Opinion, analysis and exhibits of John J. Ford, Jr. Expert Witness on behalf of Thomas Ryan Sustaining Genuineness (n.p. [probably New York], 1967). An extremely rare work prepared for the Professional Numismatist Guild. It consists of 113 typed pages, with 27 exhibits (copies of letters and reports). Only a few copies produced. Also titled *The Franklin Hoard of United States Assay Office of Gold Bars. An Answer to Eric P. Newman*. See above p. 117.
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John J. Ford, Jr. A Brief Retrospective

by John W. Adams

Long in failing health, John J. Ford, Jr., died on July 5th.¹ The hobby in general loses a giant and the medal collecting fraternity in particular loses its brightest star.

Some members of the NBS knew John personally. Most members only knew “of him” having heard a variety of comments — some good, many bad — about a man who enjoyed controversy as much as he did the vast body of knowledge he accumulated in his library and files.

In his early years, John shared his knowledge, writing brilliant articles for Wayte Raymond’s *Coin Collectors Journal*, *The Numismatist* and the *Numismatic Scrapbook*. Then, of course, there was that landmark series of auction catalogues written by Ford and Walter Breen for New Netherlands Coin Company and extending over two decades. Most aficionados agree that there have been no more authoritative catalogues written before or since. The tragedy is that John published almost nothing in the 35 years thereafter.

John’s fatal flaw was that he did value money but found it difficult to value his time. Rather than buy one book for \$20, he would buy five for \$16 each, making the effort to sell (and deliver) the remaining four at \$20 each so as to obtain his copy for free. The cumulative amount of time invested in saving very finite sums could have been gainfully employed in writing on an almost endless list of subjects about which he was expert. The money was saved but his knowledge was never disseminated.

Ford was embroiled in a controversy that has lasted for forty years regarding western assay ingots. This author is convinced that the man never knowingly sold anything that was false but he is equally convinced that many of the ingots in question were indeed counterfits. If it had crossed John’s mind — as it may have — that he, the great John Ford, had been duped by his source, he was too proud to admit it. His detractors have never adduced an iota of evidence that he knowingly sold fake products, much less that he made them.

So, yes, the man had his faults but these shrink into relative triviality when compared to his virtues. John was first and foremost a gatherer of information — thorough, relentless and meticulously accurate. When his research files are installed at the American Numismatic Society, these will become the foundation for scholarships for decades to come. Author after author will shower credit on Ford for the energy expended and the relevance of the material

¹ This work was originally published in *The MCA Advisory* 8/7 (2005), pp. 3-5. It is reprinted with the permission of the author.

therein. George Kolbe's auctions of the Ford Library document the length and breadth of the man's interests. There is little in the field of numismatic Americana that did not attract his interest.

As a collector of numismatic Americana, John had no peer. Stacks' first eleven sales of his holdings across a variety of specialties stand as a monument to his foresight in gathering material before it was popular as well as his zeal in persevering toward near perfection of each series. Between the collector and his brilliant Bosworth, Michael Hodder, each auction catalogue has become a reference work in itself. Fortunately for we medal collectors the best is yet to come (not that four Washington and Columbia medals, eight clichés of the Diplomatic Medal and a near complete run of War of 1812 in silver have made for a shabby beginning). Ford's first love was the so-called Betts medal series and this material will be offered beginning in January 2006. No better, much less comparable, collection has ever appeared at an auction. Ford's attainments in the field of medals will educate and inspire us all. No doubt, many new collectors will be attracted to the field.

All the coins and medals that John owned were coins and medals that other collectors did not own. His very success caused envy among rival collectors who had been beaten out by one means or another. Thus, jealousy accounts for much of the ill will that the man accumulated.

John out-collected me on many an occasion and my reaction could have been the same as that of many others. Instead, I chose to ally myself with the enemy to learn rather than to oppose. For his part, John chose to reach out to me, with the result that we enjoyed an increasingly close relationship for 30 years. I, the student, was the recipient of hundreds of hours of tutorials. John, the master, was gratified that his knowledge had found such a receptive field in which to take root.

Whereas Ford wasted time in paying overly much attention to unimportant details, he invested vastly greater amounts of time in answering the questions of others, in reviewing manuscripts and, in general, serving as a database of information for the hobby. Perhaps, this time could have been better spent in writing books but, not really, because no book written by John J. Ford, Jr., the author, could have passed muster with John J. Ford, Jr. the editor.

He was the ultimate perfectionist. We medal collectors will remember the man as a pioneer who opened up vast tracts of wilderness that will be developed by those of us who follow in his steps. He will be remembered by other specialists in a similar fashion.

Kenneth Jenkins 1919-2005

by E. Tomlinson Fort

Gilbert Kennneth Jenkins, one of the world's great numismatic scholars and writers of the post World War II era, passed away on 22 May 2005. Born on 2 July 1918, he was educated at Bloxham school in Oxfordshire and gained an open scholarship in classics at Corpus Christ, Oxford, where he began his studies in 1936. The War interrupted his studies and he served as an officer in the Royal Artillery and flew as a reconnaissance pilot in South East Asia.

At Oxford he met Sir Edward Stanley Robinson and Humphrey Sutherland of the Ashmolean Museum. Under their influence he took up the study of ancient Greek coinages. After receiving his degree in 1946 he became assistant keeper of coins at the British Museum. There he would remain for the rest of his working life, eventually rising to the post of Keeper in 1965.

He served as an assistant editor for the *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, the leading journal for those interested in ancient Greece, from 1950 to 1955. Between 1964 and 1974 Jenkins was one of the Royal Numismatic Society's Honorary Secretaries, he also co-edited the *Numismatic Chronicle* in 1964 and 1965 and remained on the journal's editorial committee until 1978. Throughout his working life he published works in all the leading European and American journals as well as a number of monographs on the coinages of Sicily and North Africa. His knowledge of history, his careful die studies, his eye for artistic and stylistic detail lead to highly authoritative works that were written in a style which was always a pleasure to read. His contributions to numismatics led to his receiving the Medal of the Royal Numismatic Society, the Archer Huntington Medal of the American Numismatic Society and the Akbar Medal of the Indian Numismatic Society.

While the bulk of Jenkin's literary output was aimed at a scholarly audience. He also produced a large survey of ancient Greek coinage that was intended for the more general reader. The success of this work can be seen by the fact that after the first edition sold out it fetched high prices from numismatic book dealers and at auction. Eventually, a second, and even better, edition was produced and it has again become a sought after item among the general audience and specialists.

In addition to his numismatic works, Jenkins was a keen musician and he and his wife, Cynthia (who passed away in 1985), would have friends over to listen to his piano recitals at their home in Kew. His personal experiences of the horrors of war led him to become a vocal opponent of nuclear weapons and an active supporter of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). He was also a strong

backer of environmental causes and a devotee of public transportation.

After his retirement in 1978, declining health and eyesight limited his writing output to a great extent, but the works he produced from the 1950s through the 1980s show a depth of knowledge equaled by few on either side of the Atlantic and place him among the leading numismatic literary figures of the twentieth century.

A select chronological bibliography of the works of Kenneth Jenkins in the author's library:¹

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¹A fuller listing of Jenkins' works can be found in U. Wartenberg, "The Published Work of Kenneth Jenkins," in *Essays in Honour of Robert Carson and Kenneth Jenkins*, ed. M. Price, A. Burnett and R. Bland (London, 1993), pp. 281-284.

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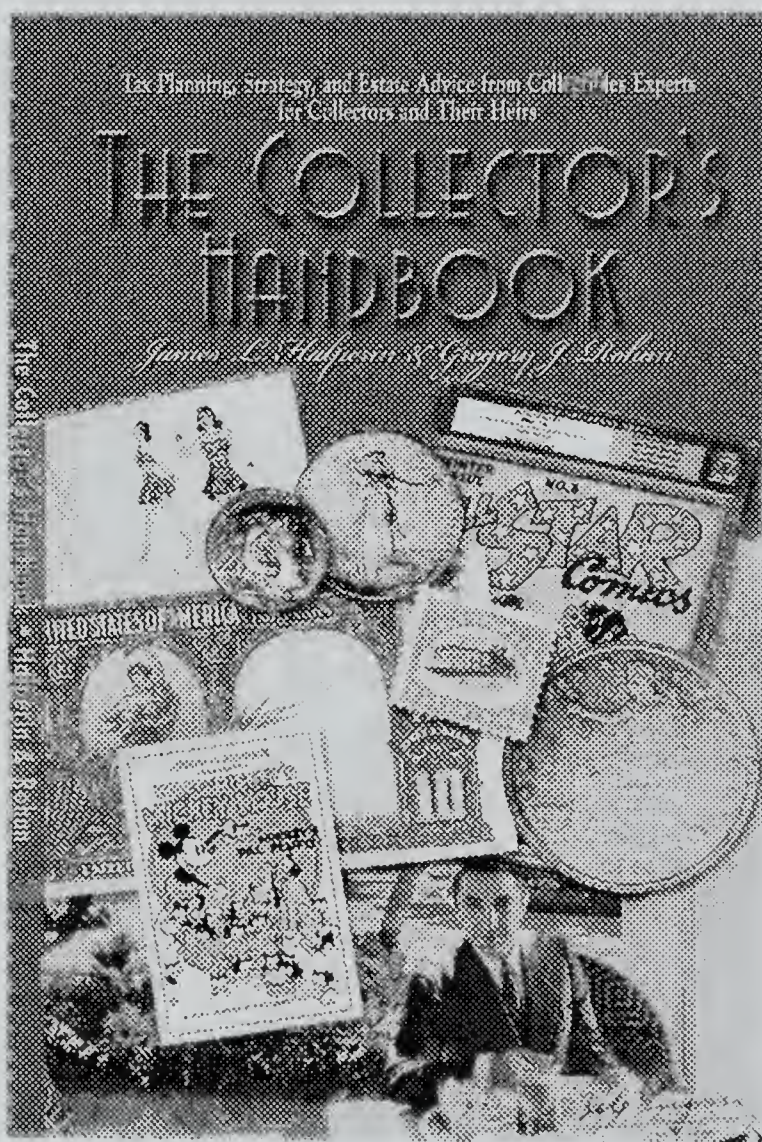
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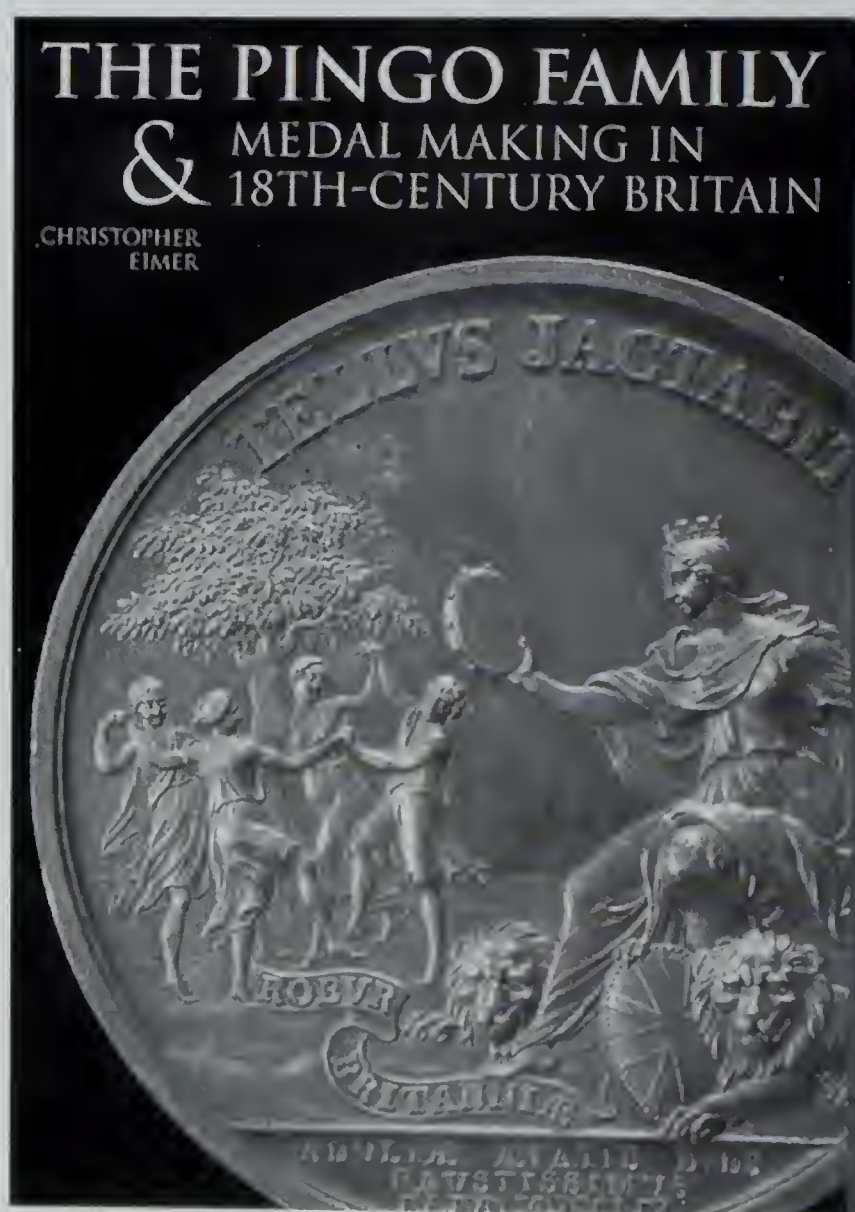
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